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SUBJECT: TURKISH GENERAL STAFF VIEWS ON IRAQ

Classified By: CDA Nancy McEldowney, reasons 1.4 (b and d)

11. (C) Summary: Turkish General Staff (TGS) J-3 Chief of Plans and Operations MG Kenan Kocak told a visiting Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations (SACFO) staff delegation led by Paul Grove on July 26 that TGS is not optimistic about a decrease in the level of violence in Iraq and that its most important concern is the freedom of movement and logistic support allowed PKK terrorists in the north. He stated TGS is prepared to mount cross-border attacks against PKK terrorist camps in Iraq, but the decision to do so is a political one. The TGS does not relish the prospect of a cross-border operation. TGS hopes the U.S. will maintain troop levels in Iraq until stability can be achieved, but is against positioning more U.S. forces in the north. End summary.

Turkish Military Goals for Iraq Clear

12. (C) In a joint meeting with MG Serdar Savas, J-5, at TGS, MG Kocak told Staffdel Grove that the TGS views the current overall situation in Iraq as "catastrophic," and said that TGS was not optimistic about a decrease in violence in the short term. Noting that it was easier to destroy than to rebuild, Kocak explained TGS must base its planning on long-term projections and believes that it might take as long as 10 to 20 years to achieve the stabilization of Iraq. While U.S. forces have made some progress in and around Baghdad and in Anbar Province recently, he stated, the positive results appear to TGS to be relatively limited in scope and of questionable durability.

13. (C) Turkey has no hidden agenda regarding Iraq, Kocak said. The notion that Ankara has neo-Ottoman ambitions on Iraqi territory is baseless. From the TGS perspective, Turkey has three main objectives for Iraq: that it remain an integrated state, that stabilization be achieved, and that it have full control of activities on its soil. Meanwhile, TGS believes Turkey should strengthen its own border security, and that activities within Iraq should be contained.

PKK the Main Concern

14. (C) The most important immediate concern for TGS is the

safe haven being provided to PKK terrorists in northern Iraq.

The PKK has freedom of movement and the logistic support it needs to be able to launch attacks on Turkey from camps inside Iraq. Kocak complained that requests from the USG for Turkey to engage the GOI on this problem constituted "fuzzy thinking" since the GOI has little power over local groups in northern Iraq. The U.S. appears to have adopted a double standard on terrorism, he claimed. The trilateral process involving GEN Ralston has resulted in no concrete steps or tangible action taken against PKK terrorists, he complained. Turkey long ago provided a detailed compilation of steps it hoped could be taken, beginning with a declaration by the government of Iraq that the PKK is a terrorist organization, the arrest of PKK leaders living openly in northern Iraq, and military action against PKK bases. To Turkey's frustration, the U.S. does not seem to take these fundamental requests seriously.

15. (C) On the possibility of cross-border attacks against PKK terrorist targets within Iraq, Kocak told the Staffdel that TGS does not prefer this tactic. While TGS is prepared to mount strikes into northern Iraq, the decision to initiate a cross-border operation would be a political one. Turkish public perception about the problem, and about the lack of U.S. action against PKK terrorists in Iraq, is having a critical effect on the political decision about whether to launch an attack, Kocak argued. If there are going to be changes in U.S. policy, they must be accompanied by actions, and not just pronouncements, otherwise they will have a negative effect. A sincere approach by the U.S. can change the current dynamic, Kocak stressed. He acknowledged appreciation for U.S. initiatives to combat PKK fund-raising

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and propaganda efforts in Europe, but cited the recent decision by Austrian authorities to release from custody and return to Iraq senior PKK leader Riza Altun as the latest example of unhelpful actions taken by European governments.

Oppose U.S. Troops in Northern Iraq

16. (C) TGS is concerned about the effects of a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq and would prefer to see U.S. forces remain until more significant stabilization is achieved, Kocak told the Staffdel. He outlined two perspectives on U.S. withdrawal: one view is that civil war will intensify when U.S. forces withdraw. The other view is that a U.S. pull-back could result in a decrease in violence since many of the attacks are directed at U.S. troops and facilities. In either case, TGS is against any concomitant increase in U.S. forces in northern Iraq. More U.S. troops in the north would draw increased terrorist violence to that region, and, in TGS's view, American forces could be exploited by local groups in the north. Kocak stated that TGS has difficulty assessing the loyalty of recently trained Iraqi security forces, questioning whether they are more loyal to the state or to militia or religious groups.

17. (U) Staffdel Grove did not have an opportunity to clear this message.

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